

Hi fellow members!

Although SoA staff are now installed at our new premises at Bedford Row, the building work continues, so our last meeting was hosted at the Royal Court Theatre in Chelsea. Below is a summary of what we discussed.

EVENTS

We're planning two regional events for the forthcoming year, along with a long delayed (re)launch event for the Group in September. The proposed regional events are a children's or general radio drama panel event with Imison Award winners, to be held in Birmingham, and a TV drama event in Wales with one of the heads of the well-known Welsh production company, Bad Wolf.

We've also identified a demand for workshop style events in various aspects of scriptwriting, both creative and practical, and the Committee has agreed to develop a programme for delivery once we are settled into our new HQ. In this context, it will be interesting to see the results of our development manager Francesca's just-launched survey into members needs for training and development.

AUDIO AWARDS

The BBC Audio Drama Awards (ADAs) ceremony was held in early February and Theo, Sophia and members of the committee attended. The winner was Lulu Raczka. Staff and members voiced various concerns about the ceremony, including a critical lack of diversity apparent among Imison entrants, ADA nominees, production teams, and indeed all attendees. Theo has raised these concerns with the BBC and we await a fuller response from them.

BBC TV FORUM

The Committee is keen to push forward with a request to join the TV Forum, so that we can fully participate in fee rate negotiations and in discussions on other issues affecting scriptwriters, to ensure that key provisions do not inadvertently exclude SoA members (e.g. over pension entitlement).

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

For the first time ever SWG was delighted to have partnered with the BFI's Future Film team for their 2019 Future Film Festival, the UK's premiere film industry festival for young, emerging filmmakers. This followed an earlier collaboration in November 2018 that saw us contribute to a panel on legal requirements for filmmakers arranged as part of that month's Future Film Lab.

Our involvement at the festival was centred on an event we had arranged for Friday 22nd March entitled 'From Idea to Screenplay' that saw us speak to scriptwriter and filmmaker Luke Shipman and scriptwriter, script-editor and comedy writer Jacqueline Haigh with the aim of offering introductory advice to young and emerging filmmakers and scriptwriters on how to craft original screenplay. We covered areas such as how to create believable characters and compelling plot, as well as considerations relating to pace, dialogue and narration. Despite taking a good number of questions from the floor the session over-ran and many attendees stayed behind to mingle with the speakers.

The event was heavily promoted by the BFI across their channels – including as a ‘story’ on Instagram – and sold out well in advance. Our support for the festival was also promoted widely. All in all, it was a hugely positive experience and we look forward to further developing our partnership with BFI Future Film as they schedule their labs for the forthcoming year.

On 23rd February, SWG co-secretary Theo Jones also attended a professional development day that had been arranged as part of the Common People Development Programme – an initiative designed to support working class writers whose work has been chosen for inclusion in the forthcoming *Common People* anthology, edited by Kit de Waal. The focus of the talk was on working as a professional writer and as writers appear increasingly to be working across many formats and media, it was pleasing to see how many of the writers expressed an interest in the areas represented by SWG.

Theo reported that it was also encouraging to hear James Trevelyan, whose job it is to encourage London-based writers to apply for ACE funding, clarify that DYCP (Developing Your Creative Practice) funding is available for scriptwriters too – indeed the shift from novelist to scriptwriter keenly demonstrates the ‘step-change’ required for an application to be successful.

CAMPAIGNING AND LOBBYING

The Committee having formally agreed to join the cross-industry Bullying and Harassment Group at our last meeting of 2018, Theo and the SoA’s Chief Exec attended a meeting of the Group in February. A ‘one year on’ summary, which was subsequently published as part of the BAFTA Awards brochure, was circulated. Key points included: 31 organisations now signed up; signature to the guidelines is now a condition of funding from the BFI and BBC Films; there have been 1,500 calls to the Film and TV Charity’s helpline; training has been piloted to ensure industry bodies have the skills they need, and will be rolled out across 2019.

We’ve also been broadly reviewing ways in which we can contribute to the growing discussion about diversity in the creative industries. We will be working and researching on how best to approach such a campaign over the coming months.

PEOPLE

We were delighted to formally welcome new Committee members Niel Bushnell and Barney Norris to their first SWG meeting in February.

Elizabeth-Anne, SWG Committee Chair

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